

CHAPTER 24

Culture and Social Psychology

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During much of its past, psychology represented a culturally grounded enterprise that took into account the constitutive role of cultural meanings and practices in human development. Yet, as historical accounts make clear (Jahoda, 1993), this attention to culture was muted during the 20th century, with psychology dominated by an idealized physical science model of explanation. This has given rise to the enigma that psychologists find it "difficult to keep culture in mind," noted by Cole (1996):

On the one hand, it is generally agreed that the need and ability to live in the human medium of culture is one of the central characteristics of human beings. On the other hand, it is difficult for many academic psychologists to assign culture more than a secondary, often superficial role in the constitution of our mental life. (p. 1)

From this type of perspective, which dominates the field, culture is seen as at most affecting the display of individual psychological processes, but not as affecting qualitatively their form.

However, although culture remains in a peripheral role in the contemporary discipline, recent years have seen a reemergence of interest in cultural approaches and an increased recognition of their importance to psychological theory. As reflected in the interdisciplinary perspective of cultural psychology (e.g., Cole, 1990; Greenfield, 1997; J. G. Miller, 1997; Shweder, 1990), human development occurs in historically grounded social environments that are structured by cultural meanings and practices. Cultural meanings and practices are themselves understood to be dependent on the subjectivity of communities of intentional agents. By affecting individuals' understandings and intentions, cultural meanings and practices, in turn, are recognized to have a qualitative impact on the development

of psychological phenomena and to be integral to the formulation of basic psychological theory.

The goal of this chapter is to highlight some of the insights for understanding social psychology emerging from a consideration of the cultural grounding of psychological processes. The first section of the chapter considers factors that have contributed to the downplaying of culture in mainstream social psychology and the assumptions that guided some of the earliest research in the traditions of cross-cultural psychology. In the second section, consideration is given to key conceptual developments underlying cultural psychology, recent empirical findings that illustrate the existence of cultural variation in basic social psychological processes, and challenges for future theory and research. In conclusion, consideration is given to the multiple contributions of a cultural perspective in psychology.

APPROACHES TO CULTURE IN MAINSTREAM SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND IN EARLY CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

The present section provides an overview of shifts in the role accorded to culture in psychological theory over time. It also outlines some of the changing conceptual understandings and disciplinary practices that are affecting these shifts.

Downplaying of Culture in Mainstream Social Psychology

Signs of the peripheral theoretical role accorded to cultural considerations in social psychology may be seen in

its being downplayed in major social psychological publications. Textbooks typically either leave the construct of culture theoretically undefined, treat it as the same as the objective environment or social ecology, or approach it in an eclectic way that lacks conceptual clarity. Likewise, basic theory tends to be presented without any reference to cultural considerations. Culture is treated merely as a factor that influences the universality of certain psychological effects but not as a process that must be taken into account to explain the form of basic psychological phenomena. An example of such a stance can be found in Kruglanski and Higgins's (2007) handbook on basic principles of social psychology in which most of the references made to culture occur within a chapter on culture by Chiu and Hong (2007) or on six pages of a chapter by Oyserman (2007) on social identity and self-regulation. Except for a one-page citation, no reference is made to culture in the 12 chapters devoted to the cognitive system, despite the chapters in this section addressing issues of basic theory on which there has been extensive cultural research, such as causal explanation, prediction, expectancy, knowledge activation, and principles of social judgment. In the following discussion, we argue that this downplaying of culture reflects to a great degree the tendency to conceptualize situations in culture-free terms, the embrace of an idealized natural-science model of explanation, and the default assumption of cultural homogeneity that dominates the field.

Culture-Free Approach to Situations

A key contribution of social psychology—if not its signature explanatory feature—is its recognition of the power of situations to impact behavior. Such a stance is reflected, for example, in a series of classic studies. Salient examples include the Milgram conformity experiment, which demonstrated that to conform with the orders of an experimenter, individuals were willing to inflict a harmful electric shock on a learner (Milgram, 1963), and the prison experiment of Zimbardo and his colleagues (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973), which demonstrated that individuals who had been thrust into the role of guards in a simulated prison behaved abusively toward individuals in the role of prisoners. It also may be seen in recent lines of inquiry on such topics as individuals' limited conscious access to their cognitive processes, priming effects, and the mere exposure effect (Bargh, 1996; Bornstein, Kale, & Cornell, 1990). Social psychological work of this type has shown that contexts affect behavior in ways that do not depend on conscious mediation and that may even

violate individuals' conscious expectations and motivational inclinations.

Supplementing this focus on the power of situations to affect behavior, it has also been documented that individual differences influence the meaning accorded to situations. This attention to individual differences is evident not only in work on personality processes but also in the attention given to cognitive and motivational schemas as sources of individual variability in behavior. Individual difference dimensions, however, typically are accorded a secondary role to situational influences within social psychological theory. They are believed to affect the display of certain basic psychological dimensions, but they are not often implicated in normative models of psychological phenomena (Ross & Nisbett, 1991).

The crucial point is that the approach to situations that dominates social psychological inquiry treats contexts as presenting objective information that can be known through inductive or deductive information processing without the need for cultural input. No consideration is given to the possibility that culture is necessarily implicated in the definition of situations or that cultural presuppositions constitute prerequisites of what is considered objective knowledge. It is assumed that variability in judgment arises from differences in the information available to individuals or from differences in their information processing abilities, resulting in certain judgments being more or less cognitively adequate or veridical than others (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Evidence that individuals from different cultural backgrounds maintain contrasting systems of belief, value, or meaning—and that they interpret situations in contrasting ways—tends to be assimilated to an individual difference dimension. Such evidence is viewed as implying that individual differences in attitudes, understandings, or available information may relate to cultural group membership, but not as implying that there is a need to give any independent weight to cultural meanings and practices per se in the construction of basic psychological theory.

Natural Science Ideals of Explanation

The tendency to downplay the importance of culture in social psychological theory also derives from the field's embrace of an idealized physical-science model of explanation. Although social psychology makes use of multiple normative models of scientific inquiry, it has typically treated physical science models of scientific inquiry as the ideal approach. This has affected both the goals and methods of inquiry in ways that have tended to marginalize cultural approaches.

In terms of explanatory goals, the foremost aim of psychological explanation has been to identify universal laws of behavior. Adopting the criteria of parsimony and of predictive power as the hallmarks of a successful explanation, psychological inquiry has been conceptualized as involving the identification of deep structural explanatory mechanisms that (it is assumed) underlie overt behavior. Higgins and Kruglanski (1996) outline this vision for social psychological inquiry:

A discovery of lawful principles governing a realm of phenomena is a fundamental objective of scientific research. . . . A useful scientific analysis needs to probe beneath the surface. In other words, it needs to get away from the "phenotypic" manifestations and strive to unearth the "genotypes" that may lurk beneath. . . . We believe in the scientific pursuit of the non-obvious. But less in the sense of uncovering new and surprising phenomena than in the sense of probing beneath surface similarities and differences to discover deep underlying structures. (p. vii)

From this perspective, the assumption is made that fundamental psychological processes are timeless, ahistorical, and culturally invariant, with the principles of explanation in the social sciences no different from those in the natural or physical sciences.

Based on the current physical-science view of explanation, cultural considerations tend to be regarded as noise; consequently, they are held constant in order to focus on identifying underlying processes. According to this perspective, an explanation that identifies a process as dependent on culturally specific assumptions is regarded as deficient. To discover that a phenomenon is culturally bound is to suggest that the phenomenon has not as yet been fully understood and that it is not yet possible to formulate a universal explanatory theory that achieves the desired goals of being both parsimonious and highly general.

Another consequence of the present physical-science model of explanation is that social psychology has tended to privilege laboratory-based methods of inquiry and to be dismissive of what is perceived to be the inherent lack of methodological control of cultural research. Skepticism surrounds the issue of whether sufficient comparability can be achieved in assessments made in different cultural contexts to permit valid cross-cultural comparisons. Serious concerns are also raised about methodological weaknesses inherent in the qualitative methods that are frequently involved in assessment of cultural meanings and practices. In particular, because such measures are at times based on analyses undertaken by a single ethnographer or similar

methods, measures used in cultural assessment are seen as characterized by limited reliability and validity, as well as by heavy reliance on interpretive techniques.

Default Assumption of Cultural Homogeneity

Finally, the downplaying of the importance of cultural considerations in social psychology also stems from the tendency to assume a universalistic cultural context in recruitment of research participants and in formulation of research questions. This type of stance has led to skewed population sampling in research. As critics (Reid, 1994) have charged, the field has proceeded as though the cultural context for human development is homogeneous; consequently, research has adopted stances that treat middle-class European-American research populations as the default or unmarked subject of research:

Culture . . . has been assumed to be homogenous, that is, based on a standard set of values and expectations primarily held by White and middle-class populations. . . . For example, in developmental psychology, children means White children (McLoyd, 1990); in psychology of women, women generally refers to White women (Reid, 1988). When we mean other than White, it is specified. (p. 525)

In this regard, a review conducted of more than 14,000 empirical articles in psychology published between 1970 and 1989 yielded fewer than 4% centering on African Americans (Graham, 1992).

However, it is not only these skewed sampling practices but also the resulting skewed knowledge base brought to bear in inquiry that contributes to the downplaying of the importance of cultural considerations. Commonly, research hypotheses are based on investigators' translations of observations from their own experiences into testable research hypotheses. In doing this, however, researchers from non-middle-class European-American backgrounds frequently find themselves having to suppress intuitions or concerns that arise from their own cultural experiences. As reflected in the following account by a leading indigenous Chinese psychologist (Yang, 1997), the present type of stance may give rise to a sense of alienation among individuals who do not share the so-called mainstream cultural assumptions that presently dominate the field:

I found the reason why doing Westernized psychological research with Chinese subjects was no longer satisfying or rewarding to me. When an American psychologist, for example, was engaged in research, he or she could spontaneously let his or her American cultural and philosophical orientations and ways of thinking be freely and effectively reflected in choosing a research question, defining a concept,

constructing a theory and designing a method. On the other hand, when a Chinese psychologist in Taiwan was conducting research, his or her strong training by over learning the knowledge and methodology of American psychology tended to prevent his or her Chinese values, ideas, concepts and ways of thinking from being adequately reflected in the successive stages of the research process. (p. 65)

It has been suggested, in this regard, that to broaden psychological inquiry to be sensitive to aspects of self emphasized in Chinese culture, greater attention would need to be paid to such presently understudied concerns as filial piety, impression management, relationship harmony, and protection of face (Hsu, 1963, 1985; Yang, 1988; Yang & Ho, 1988). Taking issues of this type into account, researchers in the area of social attribution, for example, have highlighted the understandings of causality entailed in the Buddhist concept of *yuan*, a concept that entails the idea of cooperative causes and that contrasts with the more unitary and fixed perspective on causality emphasized in Western cultural traditions (Chang & Holt, 1991). As defined by Soothill and Hodous (1968), "*yuan*... is the circumstantial, conditioning, or secondary cause, in contrast with the direct or fundamental cause... the direct cause is the seed, and *yuan* is the soil, rain, and the sunshine" (p. 440). The cultural emphasis on *yuan*, evidence suggests, is related not only to the greater emphasis given by East Asian as compared with U.S. populations to contextual factors in social attribution (e.g., Morris & Peng, 1994) but also to their tendencies to take more information into account before making causal attributions (Choi, Dalal, Kim-Prieto & Park, 2003).

As a consequence of its tendency to privilege considerations emphasized in European-American cultural contexts, psychology in many cases has focused on research concerns that have a somewhat parochial character, as Moscovici (1972) has argued in appraising the contributions of social psychology:

The real advance made by American social psychology was... in the fact that it took for its theme of research and for the content of its theories the issues of its own society. Its merit was as much in its techniques as in translating the problems of American society into socio-psychological terms and in making them an object of scientific inquiry. (p. 19)

In proceeding with a set of concepts that are based on a relatively narrow set of cultural experiences, psychological research then has tended to formulate theories and research questions that lack adequate cultural inclusiveness and instead are based on the experiences of highly select populations.

Summary

Social psychological inquiry has tended to downplay cultural factors, given its tendencies to accord no independent explanatory force to cultural factors and to embrace a natural-science model of explanation. In both its sampling practices and consideration of research questions, social psychology has privileged a middle-class European-American outlook that gives only limited attention to diverse cultural and subcultural populations.

Early Research in Cross-Cultural and Sociocultural Psychology

Although cultural considerations have tended to be accorded little importance in social psychological theory, there exists a long-standing tradition of research in cross-cultural psychology as well as in the sociocultural-historical tradition of work on culture and thought. Empirical work from these perspectives are extensive enough to fill the six-volume first edition of the *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (Triandis & Lambert, 1980), as well as numerous textbooks and review chapters (e.g., Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992; Brislin, 1983; Cole & Scribner, 1974). Brief consideration is given here to some of the major traditions of work in cross-cultural psychology, of work on culture and personality, and on individualism/collectivism, as well to early work in the sociocultural-historical tradition.

Culture and Personality

Work on culture and personality constituted an interdisciplinary perspective that generated great interest and inspired extensive research throughout the middle years of the 20th century (e.g., LeVine, 1973; Shweder, 1979a, 1979b; Wallace, 1961; J. W. Whiting & Child, 1953; B. B. Whiting & Whiting, 1975). Although many of the assumptions of this perspective were challenged, and interest in this viewpoint diminished after the 1980s, work in culture and personality has served as a foundation for later work on culture and the development of self.

Some of the earliest work in the tradition of culture and personality adopted a critical case methodology to test the generality of psychological theories. For example, in a classic example of this approach, Malinowski tested the universality of the Oedipus complex against case materials from the Trobriand Islands (1959). Likewise, in another early example, Mead provided evidence that adolescence does not invariably involve the patterns of psychosocial conflict that were once assumed in psychological theory to be universal (1928, 1939).

Other work in culture and personality developed models that portrayed culture as an integrated entity that conformed to the dominant pattern of individual personality held by members of the culture. Applying this model to an analysis of Japan, Benedict (1946) traced broad consistencies that characterized Japanese values, social institutions, national policy, and interpersonal relations. Similar types of assumptions characterized national character studies, such as in work identifying an assumed "authoritarian" personality that was viewed as characteristic of the German psyche and as contributing to the emphasis on obedience to authority observed in Nazi Germany (Fromm, 1941).

Still a third thrust of work on culture and personality forwarded a personality-integration-of-culture model (Kardiner, 1945; Whiting & Child, 1953). From this viewpoint, individual personality structures were regarded as adapted to cultural meanings and practices, which, in turn, were regarded as adapted to the demands of particular ecological settings. It was assumed that individuals come over time to be socialized to behave in ways that fit their culture. In a groundbreaking program of research that stands as one of the most influential contributions of this school of thought, the Six Culture study tested these relations in an investigation that involved conducting behavioral observations of parenting and child behavior in everyday contexts in a worldwide sampling of cultures (J. W. Whiting & Whiting, 1975). As one example of the many findings from the Six Culture project, cultures with complex socioeconomic systems, characterized by such features as occupational specialization, a central government, social stratification, and a priesthood, were observed to give rise to differences in the daily routines and roles that parents assigned to children, and to tendencies for the children to develop personality dispositions that were characterized by domineering and aggressive tendencies.

In terms of criticisms, concerns were raised about the determinism of treating culture as a reflection of individual personality, as well as regarding what was viewed as an overly socialized conception of the person—a conception that treated the individual as merely passively conforming to prevailing norms (Shweder, 1979a, 1979b). Additionally, it was argued that work in culture and personality overestimated the thematic nature of cultural forms, as well as failed to take into account the limited longitudinal stability and cross-situational consistency of personality. For example, evidence suggested that what had been interpreted as a difference in personality between cultural populations in fact could be explained in normative terms—as individuals responding to the behavioral

expectations of different everyday cultural settings (B. B. Whiting & Edwards, 1988).

Individualism-Collectivism

Constituting one of the most influential and long-standing traditions of research in cross-cultural psychology, work on individualism-collectivism is associated with the early theoretical work of investigators such as Hofstede and Triandis (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1972, 1989, 1996) and has been applied to explain behavioral variation on a worldwide scale. Thus, these constructs have been invoked in explaining such diverse phenomena, among others, as values (Hofstede, 1980; S. H. Schwartz, 1994), cognitive differentiation (Witkin & Berry, 1975), and modernity (Inkeles, 1974).

In recent years, researchers have shown increased interest in the constructs of individualism and collectivism as a consequence of these constructs being linked to the distinction drawn by Markus and Kitayama (1991) between independent versus interdependent modes of self-construal. In introducing the contrast between independent versus interdependent self-construal, Markus and Kitayama did not adopt all of the assumptions of the individualism-collectivism framework, as developed by early cross-cultural psychologists. They were concerned with the cultural psychological agenda of identifying insights for basic psychological theory of cultural variation, rather than with the cross-cultural agenda of applying existing psychological theories in diverse cultural contexts (for discussion of distinction between cross-cultural and cultural psychology, see Miller, 1997; Shweder, 1990). A cross-cultural psychologist might use the variation provided by differing social environments to test claims made in existing psychological theories, such as assessing whether, as predicted by attachment theory, less secure modes of attachment are associated with kibbutz living arrangements, which involve early separation of the child from their parents (e.g., Sagi & van Ijzendoorn, 1994). In contrast, a cultural psychologist would focus on conducting research that seeks to culturally broaden existing psychological theories, such as demonstrating that attachment theory assumes a qualitatively distinctive form in a culture such as Japan, with its emphasis on *amae* (e.g., Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli, 2000). However, in part as a reflection of the interest in the distinction between independent versus interdependent self-construals introduced by Markus and Kitayama (1991), the number of investigators concerned with individualism and collectivism has grown in recent years. Many investigators draw on this framework to further the cultural psychological

agenda of broadening basic psychological theory (e.g., Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998), while other investigators draw on the framework to further the original agenda of theorists such as Triandis to develop a universal, ecologically based framework to explain psychological variation on a worldwide scale (e.g., Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002).

In terms of limitations, work on individualism/collectivism as well as on other related broad dichotomies, such as that between interdependent vs. independent self-construal (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991) or between Easterners and Westerners (e.g., Nisbett, 2003) has been criticized for its stereotypical portrayal of these two cultural systems (e.g., Dien, 1999; J. G. Miller, 2002, 2004). Methodological criticisms have also been directed at the widespread use of attitudinal scale measures in work in this tradition (e.g., Kitayama, 2002), with theorists noting the many problems associated with the limited ability of individuals to report on their culture and with the inattention to everyday cultural practices, artifacts, and routines.

Sociocultural-Historical Approaches to Culture and Thought

Inspired by Vygotsky and other Soviet investigators (e.g., Vygotsky, 1929, 1934/1987, 1978; Luria, 1928, 1976), theorists in the early sociocultural-historical tradition assumed that culture has a formative influence on the emergence of thought. Rather than viewing development as proceeding independently of cultural learning, cultural learning was assumed to be necessary for development. Vygotskian theory and related sociocultural-historical approaches emphasized the importance of tool use in extending cognitive capacities. From this perspective, cognitive development was seen as involving the internalization of the tools provided by the culture. Among the key cultural tools assumed to transform minds were literacy and formal schooling, through their assumed effects of providing exposure to abstract symbolic resources and giving rise to modes of reasoning that are relatively decontextualized and not directly tied to practical activity (e.g., Goody, 1968).

The earliest traditions of research undertaken by sociocultural historical theorists resembled those of Piagetian researchers in both their methods and their findings. After making minor modifications, experimental tests were administered to diverse cultural populations, that were selected to provide a contrast in the cultural processes thought to influence cognitive development, such as

literacy and schooling (e.g., Bruner, Olver, & Greenfield, 1966; Cole, Gay, Glick, & Sharp, 1971). Early results revealed that individuals who were illiterate or who lacked formal education scored lower in cognitive development, failing to show such features as abstract conceptual development or propositional reasoning, which appeared as end points of cognitive development in Western industrialized contexts. Such findings supported a "primitive versus modern mind" interpretation of cultural differences, in which it was assumed that the cognitive development of certain populations remains arrested at lower developmental levels (Greenfield & Bruner, 1969).

Later experimental research in the sociocultural-historical tradition challenged these early conclusions about global differences in thought and about the transformative impact of cultural tools on minds. Programs of cross-cultural research were undertaken that focused on unpacking the complex cognitive processes that are tapped in standard cognitive tests (Cole & Scribner, 1974). Also, processes such as memory were assessed in the context of socially meaningful material, such as stories, rather than merely in decontextualized ways, such as through the presentation of words. These and similar modifications showed that cognitive performance varied depending on features of the task and that cultural differences did not remain stable. In a landmark program of such research, Scribner and Cole (1981) conducted research among the Vai tribal community as a way of assessing the impact of literacy on thought independently of the effects of schooling. Although formal schooling enhanced performance on tests of cognitive achievement, it had limited generality to everyday domains of thought (Sharp, Cole, & Lave, 1979).

Overall, early work in the sociocultural-historical tradition established a strong foundation for contemporary cognitive research in cultural psychology. Whereas early findings suggested that culture had the effect of arresting the rate of cognitive development or the highest levels of cognitive development attained, this finding was qualified as conclusions pointed to the need for a more contextually based view of cognition. The initial image of global cultural differences in thought, linked to an image of a primitive versus modern mind, gave way to a view of common basic cognitive competencies.

Summary

In sum, early research in cross-cultural psychology and in the sociocultural-historical tradition laid a groundwork for contemporary research in cultural psychology. This early research, however, tended to remain in a relatively

peripheral role in the discipline and not to impact fundamentally on psychological theory. Thus, in particular, work on culture and personality never challenged the universality of psychological theories. Work on individualism and collectivism was concerned with developing parameters that affected the level of development of particularly psychological phenomena, but not the nature of the psychological phenomena themselves. Although early research in the sociocultural-historical tradition approached cognitive processes as culturally dependent, it tended not to go beyond a contextually based view of cognition and claims of universal cognitive competencies in its implications for psychological theory.

Insights and Challenges of Cultural Psychology

Cultural psychology represents an eclectic interdisciplinary perspective that has many roots. In many (but not all) cases, investigators associated with some of these traditions of research in cross-cultural psychology moved toward a cultural psychological outlook in response to the perceived limitations of some of the conceptual frameworks and goals of their earlier research. Thus, for example, many leading investigators associated with culture and personality, such as individuals who worked on the Six Culture project (B. B. Whiting & Whiting, 1975), as well as those associated with early work in the sociocultural-historical tradition on culture and thought, are at the forefront of contemporary work in cultural psychology. Research in cultural psychology has also drawn from disciplinary perspectives outside psychology. Thus, within psychological and cognitive anthropology, many investigators moved in a cultural psychological direction both from a concern that some of the early theories of culture and personality were parochial and needed to be formulated in more culturally grounded terms and from a sense that to understand culture requires attention to psychological and not merely anthropological considerations (e.g., Lutz & White, 1986; T. Schwartz, White, & Lutz, 1992; Shore, 1996; Strauss & Quinn, 1997). Thus, for example, arguments were made that to avoid an oversocialized conception of the person as merely passively conforming to cultural expectations required taking into account the subjectivity of intentional agents (e.g., Strauss, 1992). In another major research tradition, interest developed in cultural work within sociolinguistics. Thus, in work on language learning, it was recognized that individuals come to acquire not only the code of their language but also the meaning systems of their culture through everyday language use (e.g., Heath, 1983; P. Miller, 1986;

Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984). Likewise, it came to be understood that everyday discourse contexts serve as a key context of cultural transmission.

Key Conceptual Premises

The perspective of cultural psychology is defined conceptually by its view of culture and psychology as mutually constitutive phenomena. From this perspective, cultural processes are seen as presupposing the existence of communities of intentional agents who contribute meanings and form to cultural beliefs, values, and practices. Psychological functioning is seen as dependent on cultural mediation, as individuals participate in and come to acquire, as well as create, and transform the shared meaning systems of the cultural communities in which they participate. It is this monistic assumption of psychological and cultural processes as mutually dependent—not the type of methodology adopted—that is central to cultural psychology. Thus, for example, whether an approach employs qualitative versus quantitative methods or comparative versus single cultural analysis does not mark whether the approach may be considered as within the tradition of cultural as compared with cross-cultural psychology.

Active Contribution of Meanings to Experience

A core assumption underlying cultural psychology is linked to the insight of the Cognitive Revolution regarding the importance of meanings in mediating behavior (Bruner, 1990). Individuals go beyond the information given as they contribute meanings to experience, with these meanings in turn influencing individuals' affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions. The cultural implications of this cognitive shift were not appreciated immediately within psychology. Rather, as Bruner (1990) observes in presenting a brief history of the field, there was a tendency for many years to emphasize the autonomous self-construction of knowledge—independently of cultural transmission. The cultural implications of the Cognitive Revolution were also not apparent for many years because of the ascendancy of information-processing accounts of cognition, which stress the automatic processing of information rather than the more active and creative processes of meaning making. Nonetheless, although this image of an active constructivist agent for many years was not linked with cultural viewpoints, it formed a valuable theoretical basis for cultural psychology. The recognition that an act of interpretation mediates between the stimulus and the response established a theoretical basis on which investigators could draw as they began to appreciate the

cultural aspects of meanings and these meanings' impact on thought and behavior.

Symbolic Views of Culture

The development within anthropology of symbolic views of culture (Geertz, 1973; Sahlins, 1976; Shweder & LeVine, 1984) also contributed to the emergence of cultural psychology in that it highlighted the need to go beyond the prevailing tendency to treat culture merely in ecological terms as an aspect of the objective environment. Ecological views of culture have value in calling attention to the adaptive implications of features of the context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). However, they also are limited in treating the context exclusively in objective terms, as presenting affordances and constraints that are functional in nature. In such frameworks, which have tended to be adopted in both mainstream and cross-cultural psychology, culture is seen as nonessential to the interpretation or construction of reality. In contrast, within symbolic approaches, cultural systems are understood as bearing an indeterminate or open relationship to objective constraints rather than being fully determined by adaptive contingencies. Within symbolic approaches to culture, cultural meanings are seen as serving not merely to represent reality, as in knowledge systems, or as serving a directive function, as in systems of social norms. Rather, they assume constitutive or reality-creating roles. In this latter role, cultural meanings serve to create social realities, whose existence rests partly on these cultural definitions (Shweder, 1984). This includes not only cases in which culturally based social definitions are integral to establishing particular social institutions and practices (e.g., marriage, graduation) but also cases in which such definitions form a key role in creating psychological realities. Thus, it is increasingly recognized that aspects of psychological functioning (e.g., emotions) depend, in part, for their existence on cultural distinctions embodied in natural language categories, discourse, and everyday practices. For example, the Japanese emotional experience of *amae* (Doi, 1973; Yamaguchi, 2001) presupposes not only the concepts reflected in this label but also norms and practices that support and promote it. As an emotional state, *amae* involves a positive feeling of depending on another's benevolence. At the level of social practices, *amae* is evident not only in caregiver-child interactions in early infancy (Doi, 1973, 1992), but also in the everyday interactions of adults, who are able to presume that their inappropriate behavior will be accepted by their counterparts in close relationships (Yamaguchi, 2001).

The significance of a symbolic view of culture for the development of cultural psychology was in its complementing the attention to meaning-making heralded by the cognitive revolution. It became clear not only were meanings in part socially constructed and publicly based, but they also could not be purely derived merely by inductive or deductive processing of objective information. In this way, culture became an additional essential factor in psychological explanation, rather than merely a focus on objective features of the context and subjective features of the person.

Incompleteness Thesis

Finally, and most critically, the theoretical grounding of cultural psychology emerged from the realization of the necessary role of culture in completion of the self, an insight that has been termed the incompleteness thesis (Geertz, 1973; Wertsch, 1995). This stance does not assume the absence of innate capacities or downplay the impact of biological influences as a source of patterning of individual psychological processes. However, without making the assumption that psychological development is totally open in direction, with no biological influences either on its initial patterning or on its subsequent developmental course, this stance calls attention to the essential role of culture in the emergence of higher-order psychological processes. Individuals are viewed not only as developing in culturally specific environments and utilizing culturally specific tools, but also as carrying with them, in their language and meanings systems, culturally based assumptions through which they interpret experience. Although there has been a tendency within psychology to treat this culturally specific input as noise that should be filtered out or controlled in order to uncover basic features of psychological functioning, the present considerations suggest that it is omnipresent and cannot be held constant or eliminated. Rather, it is understood that the culturally specific meanings and practices that are essential for the emergence of higher-order psychological processes invariably introduce a certain cultural-historical specificity to psychological functioning. As Geertz (1973) once noted:

We are . . . incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture—and not through culture in general but through highly particular forms of it. (p. 49)

From the present perspective, it is assumed that whereas an involuntary response may proceed without cultural mediation, culture is necessary for the emergence

of higher-order psychological processes. Wertsch (1995) articulates this point:

Cultural, institutional, and historical forces are 'imported' into individuals' actions by virtue of using cultural tools, on the one hand, and sociocultural settings are created and recreated through individuals' use of mediational means, on the other. The resulting picture is one in which, because of the role cultural tools play in mediated action, it is virtually impossible for us to act in a way that is not socioculturally situated. Nearly all human action is mediated action, the only exceptions being found perhaps at very early stages of ontogenesis and in natural responses such as reacting involuntarily to an unexpected loud noise. (p. 160)

Thus, for example, whereas involuntary physiological reactions may be elicited by situational events, whether they become interpreted and experienced in emotional terms depends in part on such input as culturally based theories regarding the nature, causes, and consequences of emotions, cultural routines for responding to emotions, natural language categories for defining emotions, and a range of other sociocultural processes.

This assumption of the interdependence of psychological and cultural processes represents the central idea of cultural psychology. Notably, the term *cultural psychology* was selected by theorists to convey this central insight that psychological processes need to be understood as always grounded in particular sociocultural-historical contexts that influence their form and patterning, just as cultural communities depend for their existence on particular communities of intentional agents. The present considerations then lead to the expectation that qualitative differences in modes of psychological functioning will be observed among individuals from cultural communities characterized by contrasting self-related sociocultural meanings and practices.

Summary

Among the key conceptual insights giving rise to cultural psychology were the emergence of a view of the individual as actively contributing meanings to experience and an understanding of culture as a symbolic system of meanings and practices that cannot be explained exclusively in functional terms as mapping onto objective adaptive constraints. Crucial to the field's development was that it also came to be recognized that higher-order psychological processes depend for their emergence on individuals' participation in particular sociocultural contexts, and thus that culture is fundamental to the development of self.

Select Overview of Empirical Research in Cultural Psychology

The present section reviews studies in social psychology that embody this core insight regarding the cultural grounding of psychological processes, an insight that is central to the many traditions of work in cultural psychology (e.g., Cole, 1990, 1996; Markus et al., 1996; J. G. Miller, 1997; Shweder, 1990; Shweder et al., 1998). While the overview is selective in the range of research it considers as well as in its focus on work in social psychology, the overview serves to illustrate ways in which cultural research is offering new insights into the cultural grounding of psychological phenomena. Consideration here is given to sample cultural psychological research on core substantive topics in social psychology. In each case, the work reviewed identifies variability in basic psychological processes.

Social Attribution

In early groundbreaking work on social attribution, Shweder and Bourne (1984) challenged the completeness of contemporary social psychological theories of social attribution. It was documented that, as compared with European-Americans, Hindu Indians place significantly greater emphasis in person description on actions versus abstract traits, with their person descriptions more frequently making reference to the context. Thus, for example, their investigation revealed that whereas European-Americans are more likely to describe a friend by saying she is friendly, Indians are more likely to describe the friend by saying she brings cakes to my family on festival days. This type of cultural difference was not explicable in terms of the types of ecological or individual psychological factors that had been emphasized in previous studies, such as variation in schooling, literacy, socioeconomic status, linguistic resources, or capacities for abstract thought. Rather, the trends were demonstrated to reflect the contrasting cultural conceptions of the person and related sociocultural practices emphasized in Hindu Indian versus European-American cultural communities.

Subsequent cross-cultural developmental research on social attribution demonstrated that these types of cultural considerations give rise to variation in the paths and endpoints of development (J. G. Miller, 1984, 1987). It was documented that whereas European-American children show an age increase in their reference to traits (e.g., "she is aggressive") but no age-related change in their reference to contextual considerations, Hindu Indian

children show an age increase in their references to the social context (e.g., "there are bad relations between our families") but no age increase in their references to traits. This type of work has been extended to understanding the development of theory of mind, with cultural work calling into question claims that theory of mind understandings develop spontaneously toward an endpoint of trait psychology (Lillard, 1998; Wellman & Miller, 2008).

The research has also been extended to the domain of autobiographical memory, with work by Qi Wang and her colleagues documenting that the age of first autobiographical memories are earlier among the U.S. than among Chinese populations, and that the content of these memories vary in ways that reflect cross-cultural differences observed in social attribution (Han, Leichtman & Wang, 1998; Wang, 2001, 2004; Wang & Leichtman, 2000). Thus, whereas the autobiographical memories of U.S. children and adults tend to be focused on the self's unique perspective, the autobiographical memories of Chinese children and adults tend to focus on everyday social routines and to include more information about social relations.

In other lines of work on social attribution and cognition, cultural research is calling into question the universality of various attribution tendencies long assumed to be basic to all psychological functioning. Thus, for example, it has been demonstrated that Japanese college students tend to maintain weaker beliefs in attitude-behavior consistency than do Australian college students (Kashima, Siegal, Tanaka, & Kashima, 1992), while being less prone than are North American college students to show cognitive dissonance biases—that is, tendencies to distort attitudes and beliefs to make them more congruent with behavior (Heine & Lehman, 1997; Hoshino-Browne, Zanna, Spencer, Zanna, Kitayama & Lackenbauer, 2005; Kitayama, Snibbe, Markus & Suzuki, 2004). Also, relative to European-Americans, East Asians have been found to be less prone to the fundamental attributional error (Ji, Peng, & Nisbett, 2000), a tendency to treat behaviors as correspondent with dispositions. Likewise, reflecting their sensitivity to context, Japanese show less vulnerability than do Americans to the correspondence bias, a tendency to infer corresponding attitudes in a person whose behavior is constrained (Masuda & Kitayama, 2004). It has also been found that Chinese, as compared with Americans, are less influenced by the response alternatives presented on rating scales when reporting on unobservable behavior, an effect seen as reflecting the emphasis in collectivist cultures on monitoring of behavior to avoid inappropriate conduct (Ji, Schwarz & Nisbett, 2000).

Cognitive Styles and Perception

Extending this earlier attributional work, a line of research has also developed to support the claim that cultural variation exists at the level of core epistemological presuppositions that impact on basic perceptual processes. In particular, the claim has been made by Nisbett and his colleagues that East Asian outlooks embody a holistic viewpoint that approaches thought in a dialectical way that makes little use of formal logic, whereas Western outlooks embody an analytic viewpoint that focuses attention on objects and that relies on rules and formal logic (Nisbett, 2003; Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001; Peng & Nisbett, 1999). These contrasting outlooks are seen as having their origins historically in markedly different social and cultural systems that existed in Ancient Greek and Chinese society, which were characterized by contrasting emphases on aspects such as personal agency versus social harmony, and on free debate versus social control. In terms of implications for psychology, holistic as compared with analytic thought is shown to impact on logic as well as on basic perceptual processes.

In terms of logic, the contrast is drawn between dialectical outlooks associated with Chinese and other East Asian cultural perspectives that emphasize seeking a "middle way" between opposing positions that might otherwise appear as seeming contradictions, in contrast to an analytic outlook that constitutes a lay version of Aristotelian logic and emphasizes resolving apparently contradictory positions to derive one assumed correct outlook. Reflecting this type of contrast, experimental research has demonstrated that when presented with different types of arguments, Chinese, as compared with U.S. participants, preferred dialectical over classical Western arguments (Peng & Nisbett, 1999; see also Ji, Nisbett, & Su, 2001). Also, when presented with apparently contradictory propositions, Chinese were moderately accepting of both positions while Americans adopted more polarized outlooks. These contrasting perspectives have also been shown to affect knowledge related to the self. Thus, for example, research has shown that contradictory self-knowledge is more accessible among Japanese and Chinese than among Euro-Americans (Spencer-Rodgers, Boucher, Mori, Wang, & Peng, 2009; Spencer-Rodgers, Williams, & Peng, 2010). Notably, recent research is also pointing to a culturally variable preference for holistic as compared with analytic modes of thought (Buchtel & Norenzayan, 2008) and suggesting that the emphasis on holistic thinking found in East Asian cultures leads to a greater cultivation of expert forms of intuitive thinking, such as meditation practices, than found in the West (Buchtel & Norenzayan, 2009).

The contrast in analytic as compared with holistic thinking is also viewed as giving rise to shifts in perception, with East Asian populations more sensitive to contextual features of their environment than are Euro-Americans. For example, in experimental research, Japanese and Americans were shown animated vignettes of underwater scenes and in a subsequent recognition test asked to judge whether they had been previously shown specific objects that were now presented in either a new or in their original settings (Masuda & Nisbett, 2001). Only the responses of Japanese were affected by the contextual information, with Japanese respondents more accurate when they saw objects in their original setting as compared with a novel setting, and U.S. respondents unaffected by this contextual manipulation. These same types of culturally based perceptual differences have also been shown to affect the phenomena of change blindness, a phenomenon in visual perception in which large changes occurring in full view in a visual scene are not noticed (Simons & Rensink, 2005). Whereas research on change blindness has established that Americans are more sensitive to changes in focal objects than to objects in the periphery or context, cultural research demonstrates that the opposite trend occurs among East Asians, who are more sensitive to contextual change information than to focal object changes (Masuda & Nisbett, 2006). Work on visual perception also documents that European-Americans are spontaneously more attentive to using part-object cues in perceptual inference than are Asian Americans (Ishii, Tsukasaki, & Kitayama, 2009). Similar types of cultural differences in perception have been documented on the framed-line test (Kitayama, Duffy, Kawamura, & Larsen, 2003). This task involves presenting individuals first with a square frame within which is printed a vertical line, and next with a second square frame of the same or different size, and asking the participants to draw a line that either is the same absolute length as in the first frame (absolute task) or that is of the same proportion relative to the height of the surrounding frame (relative task). Cultural differences are found to occur, with Americans performing better on the absolute task and Japanese performing better on the relative task.

Recent work in this tradition has also focused on identifying the mechanisms underlying these types of perceptual differences, such as variation in allocation of attention. Researchers utilizing a visual change detection task found that East Asians are better than Americans at detecting color changes when a set of colored blocks is expanded to cover a wide region and are worse than Americans when it is shrunk in size (Boduroglu, Shah, & Nisbett, 2009). Such

findings support the claim that relative to Americans, East Asians tend to allocate their attention more broadly, which may be related to their overall greater context sensitivity.

Recent work has also traced this type of difference to features of the physical and cultural environment. A study that involved presenting both U.S. and Japanese college students with photographs of locations in cities in the United States, as well as in Japan, revealed that in both cultural groups the Japanese scenes tended to be seen as including more elements than did the U.S. scenes, providing support for the claim that cultural variation in patterns of attention relate to contrasting affordances of the physical context (Miyamoto, Nisbett, & Masuda, 2006). The same types of cultural differences have been found in research that involved comparing drawings of landscape pictures as well as photographs taken by U.S. and East Asian college students, as well as that analyzed styles found in Western as compared with East Asian art, with East Asian artistic products characterized by greater context inclusiveness and less object centeredness than Western artistic products (Masuda, Gonzalez, Kwan, & Nisbett, 2008).

Self-Processes

In the area of the self-concept, psychological research is challenging the long-standing assumption that individuals spontaneously engage in self-maintenance strategies that are oriented toward self-enhancement, and that self-esteem is universally fundamental to psychological well-being (Heine, Lehman, Markus & Kitayama, 1999). Open-ended attributional research on self-description has documented that whereas the open-ended self-descriptions of U.S. adults emphasize positive attributes (Herzog, Franks, Markus, & Holmberg, 1998), those of Japanese adults emphasize either weakness or the absence of negative self-characteristics (e.g., I'm poor at math, I'm not selfish). Research has also documented that whereas the scores of Americans on measures of self-esteem tend to be higher than the scale midpoints—an indication of a tendency toward self-enhancement—those of Japanese tend to be at or slightly below the scale midpoint, an indication of a tendency to view the self as similar to others (E. Diener & Diener, 1995).

In a growing body of research, investigators are also examining the boundaries of this cultural difference in self-enhancement and associated processes. Thus, for example, research that has utilized a modified version of the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald & Farnham, 2000) among Japanese and American populations indicates that the cultural difference in self-enhancement does not tend to occur

when assessed on an implicit level or in a context that does not involve emotional interdependence, but does occur at an explicit level (Kitayama & Uchida, 2003). The growing body of work conducted on this topic also indicates that self-enhancement among East Asians does not tend to occur with methods that involve directly comparing oneself to the average other, though is evident in methods in which separate judgments of self and others are made (Hamamura, Heine, & Takemoto, 2007; Heine & Hamamura, 2007; Rose, Endo, Windschitl, & Suls, 2008). However, whereas this recent work provides some indication that some level of tactical self-enhancement is universal, it supports the claim of marked cross-cultural differences in the prominence of self-enhancement and in its impact on behavior (Heine, Kitayama, & Hamamura, 2007).

One of the most far-reaching implications of this type of research is that it calls into question the centrality of self-esteem in psychological functioning in collectivist cultural communities, and suggests that other types of self-processes may be more central in everyday adaptation in such contexts. In this regard, cross-national survey research has shown that self-esteem is more closely associated with life satisfaction in individualist than in collectivist cultures (E. Diener & Diener, 1995). In contrast, a concern with maintaining relationship harmony shows a stronger relationship with life satisfaction in collectivist than in individualist cultures (Gabrenya & Hwang, 1996). These contrasting patterns of interrelationship distinguish everyday socialization practices and have adaptive consequences. Thus, for example, Chinese as well as Japanese mothers tend to be more self-critical of their children's academic performance than are U.S. mothers (Crystal & Stevenson, 1991), with this stance implicated in the tendencies of Chinese and Japanese versus U.S. mothers to place greater emphasis on their children's exerting effort to achieve academically (Stevenson & Lee, 1990). Research has also shown that whereas North Americans persist less on tasks after failure than after success, Japanese persist more after failure (Heine et al., 2001). This cultural difference is seen as resulting from the greater tendencies of Japanese to experience negative feedback as constructive rather than as a threat to their self-esteem, given their lesser tendencies to self-enhance.

Cultural research on the self is also challenging psychological theory in the domain of self-consistency. Social psychological theory has long assumed that individuals are inherently motivated to maintain a consistent view of the self and that such consistency is integral to psychological well-being. This stance is evident not only in

classic theories of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), but also in more recent work on attribution. For example, work on self-verification has shown that individuals tend to prefer information that is consistent rather than inconsistent about themselves (Swann, Wenzlaff, Krull, & Pelham, 1992), as well as that autobiographical memories are structured in ways that preserve a consistent sense of self (Ross, 1989). In addition, work on psychological health has suggested that having an integrated and consistent view of self has adaptive value (Jourard, 1965; Suh, 2000).

A growing body of attributional research in Asian cultures, however, suggests in these cultures that the self tends to be experienced as more fluid than is typically observed in U.S. populations. Work on self-description has demonstrated, for example, that the self-descriptions of Japanese but not of Americans tend to vary as a function of the presence of others (Kanagawa, Cross, & Markus, 2001). Likewise, experimental research has documented that cognitive dissonance effects tend not to be observed among Japanese as compared with Canadian populations (Heine & Lehman, 1997), and that consistency across situations shows a much weaker relationship to psychological well-being among Korean as compared with American populations (Suh, 2000).

Emotions

Emotions provide a particularly challenging area for cultural research because they involve not merely cognition but also behavioral action tendencies and somatic reactions. Notably, as suggested in the following discussion, culture affects the expression of emotions and their form, as well as their role in mental health outcomes.

One influence of cultural processes on emotion occurs in the degree of an emotion's elaboration or suppression. It has been documented that cultural meanings and practices affect the extent to which particular emotions are hypercognized (in the sense that they are highly differentiated and implicated in many everyday cultural concepts and practices) versus hypocognized (in that there is little cognitive or behavioral elaboration of them; Levy, 1984). Even universal emotions play contrasting roles in individual experience in different cultural settings. For example, whereas in all cultures both socially engaged feelings (e.g., friendliness, connection) and socially disengaged feelings (e.g., pride, feelings of superiority) may exist; however, among Japanese only socially engaged feelings are linked with general positive feelings, whereas among Americans both types of emotions have positive

links (Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000; Kitayama, Mesquita, & Karasawa, 2006).

Cross-cultural differences have also been observed in emotion categories as well as in individuals' appraisals of emotions. Variation in emotion concepts has been documented not only in the case of culturally specific categories of emotion, such as the concept of *amae* among the Japanese (Russell & Yik, 1996; Wierzbicka, 1992), but also among such assumed basic emotions as anger and sadness (Russell, 1991, 1994). For example, Turkish adults make different appraisals of common emotional experiences than do Dutch adults, whose cultural background is more individualist (Mesquita, 2001). Thus, as compared with Dutch adults, Turkish adults tend to categorize emotions as more grounded in assessments of social worth, as more reflective of reality than of the inner subjective states of the individual, and as located more within the self-other relationship than confined within the subjectivity of the individual. In addition, research documents that a relationship exists between dialectical reasoning and emotional experience, with Japanese, as compared with Americans, more prone to report experiencing both positive and negative emotions simultaneously about the same experience (Miyamoto, Uchida, & Ellsworth, 2010; Spencer et al., 2010).

Notably, work on culture and emotions is also providing evidence of the open relationship that exists between physiological and somatic reactions, social relationships, and emotional experiences. For example, research has revealed that although Minangkabau and U.S. men show the same patterns of autonomic nervous system arousal to voluntary posing of prototypical emotion facial expressions, they differ in their emotional experiences (Levenson, Ekman, Heider, & Friesen, 1992). Whereas Americans tend to interpret their arousal in this type of situation in emotional terms, Minangkabau tend not to experience emotion in such cases, because it violates their culturally based assumptions that social relations constitute an essential element in emotional experience. Likewise, it has been shown that Japanese show a greater tendency than do Americans to infer emotions based on relationships rather than on one-self (Uchida, Townsend, & Markus, 2009).

Cultural influences on the mental health consequences of affective arousal are also being documented. For example, various somatic experiences—such as fatigue, loss of appetite, or agitation—that are given a psychological interpretation as emotions by European-Americans tend not to be interpreted in emotional terms but rather as purely physiological events among individuals from various Asian, South American, and African cultural

backgrounds (Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997). Notably, such events tend to be explained as originating in problems of interpersonal relationships, thus requiring some form of nonpsychological form of intervention for their amelioration (Rosaldo, 1984; White, 1994).

Motivation, Morality, and Attachment

Whereas early cross-cultural research on motivation was informed exclusively by existing theoretical models, such as Rotter's framework of internal versus external locus of control (Rotter, 1966), recent work suggests that motivation may assume socially shared forms. This kind of focus, for example, is reflected in the construct of secondary control, which has been identified among Japanese populations, in which individuals are seen as demonstrating agency via striving to adjust to situational demands (Morling, 2000; Morling, Kitayama, & Miyamoto, 2002, 2003; Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984). Likewise, research in India is pointing to the existence of joint forms of control, in which the agent and the family or other social groups are experienced as together equally important in bringing about certain outcomes (Sinha, 1990).

In another related area of work on motivation, research is highlighting the positive affective associations linked with social expectations. For example, behavioral research has documented that Asian-American children experience greater intrinsic motivation for an anagrams task that has been selected for them by their mothers than for one that they have freely chosen (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). In contrast, European-American children experience greater intrinsic motivation when they have selected such a task for themselves.

Support for the view that agency is compatible with meeting social expectations may also be seen in attribution research, which has shown that Indian adults report wanting to help as much and deriving as much satisfaction from helping when acting to fulfill norms of reciprocity as compared with when acting in the absence of such normative expectations (J. G. Miller & Bersoff, 1994). Indians also associate a sense of choice with the fulfillment of role-related interpersonal responsibilities and social expectations to meet the needs of family and friends tend to be more fully internalized among Indians than among Americans (J. G. Miller, Das, & Chakravarthy, 2011). Although these types of findings support the assertion made by self-determination theorists that in all cultures agency involves individuals coming subjectively to experience their actions in terms of internalized motivational factors (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, & Kaplan, 2003), they underscore the need in work on self-determination theory

to recognize that cultural variation exists in the affective meanings of duty and in the degree to which acting out of a sense of role based duty rather than only out of psychological motives, such as values or felt importance, is experienced in agentic ways.

In turn, research in the domain of morality with both Hindu Indian populations (Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1990) and among orthodox religious communities within the United States (Jensen, 1997) has documented forms of morality based on concerns with divinity that are not encompassed by existing psychological theories of morality (e.g., Kohlberg, 1971; Turiel, 1983). Furthermore, work on moralities of community (J. G. Miller, 1994, 2001; Snarey & Keljo, 1991) has documented the individualistic cultural assumptions that inform Gilligan's morality of caring framework (Gilligan, 1982). This research reveals that in collectivist cultural settings responsibilities to meet the needs of family and friends tend to be regarded as role related duties rather than, as assumed by Gilligan, self-chosen commitments.

In terms of relationship research, a growing cross-cultural literature on attachment is suggesting that some of the observed variation in distribution of secure versus nonsecure forms of attachment arises, at least in part, from contrasting cultural values related to attachment, rather than from certain cultural subgroups having less adaptive styles of attachment. For example, research conducted among Puerto Rican families suggests that the greater tendency of children to show highly dependent forms of attachment reflects the contrasting meanings that they place on interdependent behavior. An analysis of open-ended responses of mothers revealed that compared with European-American mothers, Puerto Rican mothers viewed dependent behavior relatively positively as evidence of the child's relatedness to the mother. Suggesting that present dimensions of attachment may not be fully capturing salient concerns for Puerto Rican mothers, this work further demonstrated that Puerto Rican mothers spontaneously emphasized other concerns—such as display of respect and of tranquillity—that are not tapped by present attachment formulations.

In other research, work on attachment among Japanese populations highlights the greater emphasis on indulgence of the infant's dependency and on affectively based rather than informationally oriented communication in Japanese versus American families (Rothbaum, Kakinuma, Nagaoka, & Azuma, 2007; Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli, 2000, 2001). In contrast to the predictions of attachment theory, however, such forms of parenting are not associated with maladaptive outcomes;

rather, these parenting styles have positive adaptive implications in fitting in with the cultural value placed on *amae*, an orientation that involves being able to depend on the other person's good will and that plays a central role in close relationships throughout the life cycle (for related claims see also, Carlson & Harwood, 2003; Harwood, Miller, & Irizarry, 1995).

Summary

Work in cultural psychology is not only documenting cultural variability in psychological outcomes, but is also focused on uncovering respects in which this variation highlights the implicit cultural underpinnings of existing psychological effects. We have seen the existence of contrasting culturally based cognitive styles, as well as extensive cultural variation in basic psychological processes involving the self, emotions, motivation, morality, and attachment.

New Directions and Challenges

Not only has there been a dramatic increase in the number of culturally based investigations being undertaken in social psychology in recent years, but this work is proceeding in new directions. Brief consideration is given here to identifying some of these new directions as well as to pinpointing both longstanding and new challenges of social psychological work in cultural psychology.

Within and Between Cultural Variation

A valuable new direction of cultural work in social psychology is to give greater attention to within- and between-cultural variation linked to regional, cultural, as well as socioeconomic differences. Such work is pointing to varieties of individualism and collectivism as well as to the impact of differential resources and experiences on cultural outlooks.

In terms of within-culture variation, greater attention is being given to regional variation. For example, variations in cultural perspectives occur within the United States that reflect the historical experiences and outlooks that develop in particular areas (Kitayama, Conway, Pietromonaco, Park, & Plaut, 2010). In this regard, for example, Nisbett and Cohen have documented the concerns with a culture of honor in southern and western parts of the United States and shown its widespread impact on attitudes and behavior (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). In work on psychological well-being conducted among a nationally representative sample of midlife Americans, Plaut and her colleagues have also identified distinct regional concerns, such as a concern

in New England with not being socially constrained, as compared with a concern with personal growth and feeling cheerful and happy in the Southwest (Plaut, Markus, & Lachman, 2002; Markus, Plaut, & Lachman, 2004).

Increasingly researchers are also attending to variation linked to socioeconomic status. For example, ethnographic research conducted among European-Americans has documented that within lower-class and working-class communities there tends to be a "hard defensive" type of individualism, which stresses the adoption of abilities to cope in harsh everyday environments, in contrast with the "soft" individualism found in upper middle class contexts, which stresses the cultivation of individual uniqueness and gratification (Kusserow, 1999). Research also suggests that lower SES individuals, as compared to higher SES individuals, are more prone to act in a prosocial manner (Piff, Kraus, Cote, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010), have a reduced sense of personal control (Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2009), are more cognizant of others in their social environment (Kraus & Keltner, 2009), place greater emphasis on contextual considerations, and are more empathically accurate (Kraus, Cote, & Keltner, 2010). The claim has also been made that the modes of agency emphasized within working class communities resemble those found in collectivist cultures in focusing more on social and relational styles than do the models of agency found within middle class communities in the United States (Snibbe & Markus, 2005; Stephens, Markus, & Townsend, 2007).

Greater attention is also being given in recent years to expanding research beyond the simple comparisons of Asian and North American populations. This is seen, for example, in work that has shown that Central and East Europeans, like East Asians, tend to be more holistic than are U.S. populations (Varnum, Grossmann, Katunar, Nisbett, & Kitayama, 2008), and that southern Italians, who culturally are relatively more interdependent, tend to reason in a more holistic way than do northern Italians (Knight & Nisbett, 2007).

In terms of challenges, while this attention to within- and between cultural diversity represents a valuable direction to continue to pursue in future work, it is also valuable to approach it with more culturally grounded theoretical understandings and in terms of new dimensions. For example, while there may be similarities on certain psychological dimensions between the responses of working class individuals within the United States and the responses of various collectivist populations, marked differences distinguish these subgroups and thus they should not be regarded as equivalent or identical in outlook. As a way of theoretically sharpening existing explanatory

frameworks, it is crucial to continue to extend consideration of cultural variation beyond comparisons of Asian and North American populations and between contrasts on such well-worn dimensions as analytic/holistic thought or interdependent versus independent self-construal, a distinction that continues to be emphasized (Varnum, Grossmann, Kitayama, & Nisbett, 2010). For example, to the extent that holistic thinking is found not only in East Asian cultural communities, but is also evident in India as well as in various European cultural groups, theories that explain the origins of these modes of thought in terms of historical traditions linked to Greek and Chinese thought will be shown to be limited in explanatory force. Also, to the extent that communities are understood in more culturally nuanced ways, it will be possible to identify more subtle and dynamic differences distinguishing different cultural and subcultural viewpoints.

Priming and Process Accounts of Culture

One of the newest directions of cultural research in social psychology is the effort to tap culturally based processes by means of priming, a procedure that involves implicit memory effects in which exposing someone to a stimulus influences their responses to a later stimulus. This type of effort increasingly has been adopted in efforts to prime individualism and collectivism directly (Oyserman & Lee, 2008). For example, widely used primes developed by Brewer and Gardner (1996) ask participants to read a paragraph describing a trip made either alone or with others and to circle either first-person singular pronouns (in the individualistic priming condition) or plural pronouns (in the collectivist priming condition). The typical finding is for the effects of primed individualism and collectivism to parallel differences observed in cross-national comparisons undertaken between individualistic and collectivist populations. As an example, whereas Hong Kong students preferred a compromise choice when primed with collectivism (Briley & Wyer, 2002), they preferred a choice based on their personal preferences when primed with individualism.

In other approaches to priming research, priming focuses not on dimensions associated directly with individualism/collectivism but with the specific behavioral or cognitive processes believed to underlie a given effect. For example, in recent work, the assumption that differences in compassion explain the tendency for lower-class individuals to be more altruistic than upper-class individuals was experimentally supported by manipulating participants' experiences of compassion and assessing their tendencies to help another person in distress (Piff et al.,

2010). Supporting the study hypotheses, results indicated that upper class participants exhibited greater compassion in the compassion condition than in the baseline condition.

Notably, culturally based work on priming is seen, by some theorists as providing support for a situated cognition or a dynamic social constructivist view of cultural variation, in calling into question claims of fixed global differences in cultural outlook (Oyserman, Sorensen, Reber, & Chen, 2009; Weber & Morris, 2010). This work is also significant more generally, in empirically identifying mediators and moderators of any observed effects.

However, while priming represents a productive new direction for cultural research in social psychology, it is also vital to underscore its limitations and the need to go beyond current priming approaches to tap culture in more process-oriented terms. For example, the demonstration in priming work that cultural differences are contextually dependent may represent a corrective to models that portray the impact of culture on psychological processes in overly generalized ways. However, as critiques have argued (Miller, 2002), priming approaches to culture tend to be adopted in ways that reduce culture to a mere contextual effect. As also has been noted (Markus & Kitayama, 2010), it is vital to understand the contrasting cultural meanings associated with global constructs such as independence and interdependence, as well as to better understand what is likely to be the contrasting cultural knowledge elicited by priming techniques. More generally, it is crucial to avoid the tendency, assumed in certain recent social psychological research on cultural priming, to assume that priming is a means of directly "measuring" culture. In addition, it should not be assumed that culture can be measured by utilizing attitudinal scale measures, given the understanding of culture as socially shared meanings and practices rather than as individual psychological tendencies (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 2010; Miller, 1997; Shweder & LeVine, 1984).

Cultural Neuroscience

Finally, one of the newest directions of recent cultural research is to understand the neurological correlates of culturally variable psychological phenomena (e.g., Ambady & Bharucha, 2009; Chiao & Ambady, 2007). One of the contributions of this type of work is to identify the neurological correlates of known cross-cultural differences. For example, recent cross-cultural research comparing the performance of American and East Asian college students on simple visuospatial tasks has found that activation in the frontal and parietal brain regions, which are known to be associated with attentional control, were

more strongly activated during culturally nonpreferred as compared with culturally preferred judgments. This work provides evidence on a neurological level of cross-cultural differences observed in behavior, while demonstrating that culture moderates activation in brain networks (Hedden, Ketay, Aron, Markus, & Gabrieli, 2008).

Work in cultural neuroscience is also providing unique insight into neural plasticity. For example, consistent with cross-cultural differences observed on a behavioral level, it has been shown that U.S. adults show more engagement of object-processing areas in the ventral visual cortex than do Chinese young adults when assessed on a visuospatial task (Gutchess, Welsh, Boduroglu, & Park, 2006). However, this cultural difference is magnified with aging, with elderly Singaporeans displaying larger deficits in object processing brain areas than do elderly Americans (Chee et al., 2006). Providing insight into the relative contributions of biological and experiential factors in human aging, this research provides neurological support for a "use it or lose it" view of cognitive aging (Park & Huang, 2010) and highlights the unique role that cultural research can play in understanding brain-behavior relationships.

However, even with the contemporary widespread enthusiasm for this type of research and the respect that it gains in the larger discipline through linking cultural work to natural science visions of psychology (Kagan, 2007), challenges exist in the adoption of neuroscience techniques. Neuroscience techniques in many cases serve only to provide evidence that is congruent with known psychological findings while adding little if any new theoretical insights. It is also critical to recognize the extent to which many contemporary programs of research in neuroscience are circular in their conclusions, if not in cases deterministic. Thus, for example, Miller and Kinsbourne (2011) point out how recent claims by Chiao et al. (2009) to be able "to predict how individualistic or collectivist a person is across cultures" (p. 2813) by reference to patterns of brain activation are based on a circular process of inference. In particular, their conclusions depend on past cross-cultural findings related to the attributional differences they seek to predict. Additionally, neurological evidence is frequently applied in a deterministic way to argue for the biological bases of psychological phenomena, including cross-cultural differences, without taking into account respects in which brain imagining is unable to explain meaning.

Summary

Cultural research in social psychology is extending into a range of new directions, with this work giving more

attention both to between and within-culture variation in outlooks, exploring ways that priming techniques can provide insight into the contextual dependence of culturally influenced psychological effects, and expanding an understanding of brain-behavior relationships through work in cultural neuroscience. However, challenges remain in going beyond views of culture that remain overly global and stereotypical, and in identifying theoretical frameworks that can incorporate new methodologies while still providing creative new insights into the cultural grounding of basic psychological processes.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present examination of culture in social psychological theory highlights the importance of recognizing that culture is part of human experience and needs to be an explicit part of psychological theories that purport to predict, explain, and understand that experience. What work in cultural psychology aims to achieve, and what it has already accomplished in many respects, is more than to lead investigators to treat psychological findings and processes as limited in generality. Rather than leading to an extreme relativism that precludes comparison, work in this area holds the promise of leading to the formulation of models of human experience that are increasingly culturally inclusive. By calling attention to cultural meanings and practices that form the implicit context for existing psychological effects, and by broadening present conceptions of the possibilities of human psychological functioning, work in cultural psychology is contributing new constructs, research questions, and theoretical insights to expand and enrich basic psychological theory.

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